

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Contest – 2007
First Prize: Carli Pogson, Cedar Heights Middle School

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream. That dream was “The Beloved Community”. He believed that everyone could live their lives in peace and harmony. He also believed that conflicts could be resolved without violence. Today our community is not much of a Beloved Community, and it definitely could use some change.

Dr. King believed that a Beloved Community was a very achievable goal. To him a Beloved Community is a place where everyone can share the wealth of the earth without conflict. It was a place where starvation, poverty, and homelessness did not exist because the people would not allow it. Racism would be replaced by caring people who accept each other the way they are. In a Beloved Community, love and faith would overcome fear and hatred. Wars between countries would not take place and the world will be at peace. Dr. King believed that we could achieve this goal of a Beloved Community through the six steps of nonviolence. The six steps are,

- 1) nonviolence is not passive but requires courage,
- 2) nonviolence seeks reconciliation, not defeat of an adversary,
- 3) nonviolent action is directed at eliminating evil, not destroying an evil-doer,
- 4) a willingness to accept suffering for the cause, if necessary, but never to inflict it,
- 5) a rejection of hatred, animosity or violence of the spirit, as well as refusal to commit physical violence,
- 6) faith that justice will prevail.

Dr. King believed that if we apply these steps to our personal lives, and to conflicts that happen in everyday life then we will be able to achieve a Beloved Community. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “The end is reconciliation; the end is redemptions; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opposers into friends. It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men.”

In comparison to Dr. King's vision of a Beloved Community, our society falls short of his expectations in many areas. A few of the areas that our society falls short in are poverty, racism, and war. Today in everyday life people are always looking out for themselves instead of others. The people that are more fortunate would rather spend money on things for themselves, instead of donating it to the less fortunate. Another example is racism. Although it is not as bad as it used to be it still exists. Take racial profiling for example. At the security check point in the airport, Middle Eastern people get checked a little more closely because of where they are from. Wars are also another big problem. Although wars are not occurring in our communities it still affects us. Citizens from all around the community are going to fight in the Iraq war. People are dying every day over there, and sooner or later it is going to make a big impact on our population. Instead of settling the conflict peacefully as Dr. King would do, the countries are choosing to fight and innocent lives are being taken.

There are many things citizens could do to make our community a Beloved Community. First off, instead of spending so much money on new stores and shops, we could take that money and build more homeless shelters and food banks. By doing so we would cut down the number of citizens who are starving and homeless. Everyone deserves to have a good meal and everyone deserves to have a home. The second thing that could be done is volunteer work. People could volunteer for the police department to help cut down the number of crimes that are committed .Or you could volunteer to help clean up the city and make the community an even better place to live. The third thing you could do is donate. Donate to schools, the hospitals, or the homeless shelter. No matter where you are donating you will be making a difference in someone's life.

These three things are not going to stop the wars or stop racism but they will help make the community a loving place to live. Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., said that "a Beloved Community is a place where love and faith would rise above fear and hatred."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream of a Beloved Community. In some ways we have achieved that dream and as I demonstrated above there is some we have not. Dr. King was a great influence and we need to work every day to make his dream come true.

Bibliography

Fandel , Jennifer. Martin Luther King, Jr. Mankato Minnesota: Creative Education, 1994

"The Beloved Community of Martin Luther King, Jr." thekingcenter.org. 18 Nov 2007
<http://thekingcenter.org/prog/bc/index.html>.

For more information on how you can make a difference in your community visit
http://www.family-services.org/make_a_difference/index.php